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Wright State University Retirees Association

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The Extension



WRIGHT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Fall 2018 Issue 99

President's Message: Joyce Howes

Greetings Friends,

As students and faculty return to campus, the Wright State University Retirees Association (WSURA) will commence the celebration of our 25th Anniversary year. In general, anniversaries offer opportunities to highlight achievements—in other words, to brag. For now, I'll share just a few points of pride.

Thanks to the generosity of WSURA Board members, four students will receive the \$1,500 Nick Davis Scholarship, up from three awards given in previous years.



Abe Bassett, one of our longest-serving Board members, and Robin Suits, one of our newest members, have completely reinvented the WSURA website. I hope you'll visit us at www.wright.edu/wsura.

The WSURA Board has provided support to the Wright State University Archives' Oral History Project. Several members have conducted interviews and our student employee has devoted many hours transcribing those interviews. This contribution of student time has significantly hastened progress toward completion of the project.

WSURA Board members are committed volunteers who offer time and expertise to:

- St. Mary's Development Corporation, a faith-based corporation that builds low-cost housing for seniors (board member)
- Dayton Playhouse Summer Fest (script reader)
- American Heart Association (raised \$35,000 in donations over 8 years through family walkathon participation)
- Adult Education Committee at Temple Beth Or (chair)

There's so much more, but we'll save some for future publications. Meantime, review upcoming Activities and Events in this issue. I hope I'll see many of you at those gatherings.

Enjoy the fall season, get outside as much as you're able, and watch your email for our newly designed electronic communications. Our goal is to strengthen and maintain historical connections among current WSU retirees and promote new, lively relationships with new retirees. You'll hear from us!

In This Issue

Oral History Project	2
<i>Featuring Suzanne Walker</i>	
Artist's Corner	3
<i>Poetry by Gary Pacernik</i>	
<i>WSURA Art Exhibit Info</i>	
Scholarship Announcement	3
Catching Up	4
<i>Featuring Lillian Johnson</i>	
WSURA—A Look Back	5
Board Information	5
WSURA Web Info	6
Health Tidbits	6
Upcoming Events in Detail	7
WSU E-mail Policy	8

Events Calendar

September

- 20: Woodland Cemetery Tour
- 27: Live & Learn – Art Part I

October

- 4: Live & Learn – Art Part II
- 24: WSU Health/Benefits Fair
- 25: Hollywood Racino & Dinner
- 31: Discussion on Midterm Elections

November

- 11: WSU Theater Matinee

Special Note

The Fifth Annual WSURA Reunion Luncheon will be held April 25, 2019, in the Berry Room at the Nutter Center. The speaker will be Head Men's Basketball Coach, Scott Nagy.

From the WSURA Oral History Project: Kathleen Suzanne Walker

The WSURA Oral History project began in 2001 in conjunction with Chris Wydman, University Records Manager and Archivist at the Dunbar Libraries Special Collection and Archives Department. Over the years, 37 interviews with WSU retirees have been conducted, for many years under the direction of the late Lew Shupe and more recently Dan Abrahamowicz. All of the interviews are accessible from the WSURA website (wright.edu/wsura). Click on Oral History Projects in far right column and then Retirees Oral History Project. The plan is to include a selection or synopsis from one of these interviews in most issues of *The Extension* for the next several years. Enjoy!

Suzanne Walker was the first person without a bachelor's degree to be named an Associate Professor at Wright State University. Today, she uses the name Kathleen Alexander, a puzzle that goes back to when she was nineteen and became eligible to join the actor's union Equity as a dancer-performer at the Kansas City Starlight Theatre, an intense summer musical theatre where eight shows are performed in eight weeks. No two people in Equity could have the same name so Kathleen became Suzanne. Later, after she married Harry Alexander and retired, she took his last name and reclaimed her first.

Most ballet dancers who have a professional career begin their training at an early age, often by five or six years old. Suzanne did not start classes at the Schwarz School of the Dance until she was 13. Miss Jo, who founded the school along with her sister Hermene, was well known as a strict and demanding teacher with a good eye for talent. Several of her students went on to professional careers. When Suzanne graduated from Oakwood High School and enrolled at Butler University, she discovered her early training was so solid that she was immediately placed into advanced classes and given most of the lead roles.

After her sophomore year came the Kansas City experience, entry to Equity, and the determination to find a career in New York. Soon she auditioned for Disney Productions and was offered a yearlong contract, which she ultimately declined because it would have required her to leave New York. The next few years followed the familiar script of many aspiring entertainers: part-time jobs, auditions, and classes in ballet, jazz, tap and voice. Her first Equity job came within a few months when she was cast in *Cabaret*. Over the next 13 years, she performed in four Broadway shows, one Off-

Broadway production, and numerous summer stock shows. One highlight was dancing a duet with Mikhail Baryshnikov on ABC television.

During summer lulls, Suzanne often returned home to teach at the Dayton Ballet, where her good friend Stuart Sebastian was the artistic director. That connection led to a summer teaching job at Wright State in 1981, and the following year she accepted

the offer of a tenure-track assistant professorship in the Department of Theatre Arts. Eugene Cantelupe, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, saw no reason why a person of her substantial experience could not be hired, even though she didn't have the usual academic credentials.



Suzanne taught at Wright State from 1982 until 2001. Her teaching style was influenced by her father, Fred Walker, a well-known and respected band director. Under him she learned to play the clarinet and to read music, a skill that came in handy in musical theatre auditions. She was often picked to sing harmony where that skill was required. She also learned from him how to be supportive and encouraging of her students while also demanding a high level of effort and commitment. In her role as dance coordinator, Suzanne worked with two newly hired colleagues to revise the dance curriculum and establish a BFA program. Over the years, the dance program prospered and the quality of the students it attracted increased. Her choreography was always outstanding. She was especially pleased with her work in *Guys and Dolls*.

In *Producer's Notes*, founding chair Abe Bassett's "Personal History of the Department of Theatre Arts"—Suzanne Walker is identified as one of the three most important faculty in the development and success of the Theatre Arts Department.
by Abe Bassett

A New Exhibit

You may recall that last year Gary Barlow dipped into his personal art collection to create a gallery in the WSURA Office in the Foundation Building. He has now refreshed and rehung it with works by several artists, including T. L. Lang, Mari O'Brien, Lewis Shupe and G. Thomas Graham's work "Summer Winds" below. It's worth attending a program just to see the art. It's downright spectacular!



Nick Davis Scholarships Awarded

The Scholarship Committee awarded \$1,500 each to Helena and Meghan Jenkins, grand-daughters of the late Jeff Vernoo; Adam Al-Masri, Jim Hughes' grandson, and Rosa Tweed, Maureen Tweed's daughter. Congratulations to all these outstanding students. Look for profiles and photos in the winter *Extension*.

Two from Gary Pacernick

FIRST YOUR MEMORY GOES

So far I remember my name and address,
but my phone number sometimes slips my mind.
Often I forget what I planned to do.
Walking around the house,
I try to figure out what it was
that escaped my memory.
More and more I feel as if I drive through heavy fog.
But I am still holding the wheel,
trying to find my way back
to the blurred image of a yellow house
where a boy never dreamed of growing old.



SHOULD I?

Should I or should I not
have a cortisone shot
for my painful left arm and shoulder?
Such are the questions as I grow older.
Whether to take daily doses of insulin
or exercise, diet, and try to stay thin?
Should I save and invest money
or spend it on booze and a brand-new honey?
Is the face I see in the mirror
a reflection of what I fear?
Time does not stand still,
and I am fast going downhill.
Should I follow Jewish burial tradition
or save a few bucks and go with cremation?

Gary Pacernick is the author of two volumes of poetry: The Jewish Poems and Something is Happening. He also published Meaning and Memory: Interviews with Fourteen Jewish Poets. As you can see, he's not quite so old as the two poems printed here suggest.

"I've never been a big fan of society structured predominantly along lines of consumerism, but I had made my peace with it. But when it began to be that every individual person also had to be a product that they were selling and liking became paramount, that seemed like a very worrisome thing at a personal level as a human being. If you're in a state of perpetual fear of losing market share for you as a person, it's just the wrong mind-set to move through the world with."

Jonathan Franzen—Noted novelist and passionate bird watcher. Not a friend of cats. Here are some of his thoughts about Facebook. For more read his most recent novel, Purity. (The New York Times Magazine, June 26, 2018)

Catching Up... with Lillian Johnson

Lillian wore many hats during her Wright State career. In 1987 she was hired as an advisor in University Division (later University College), then she became Assistant Director of the Bolinga Center when Frank Dobson from the English Department was serving as director. In those days the Bolinga Center and the Honors Program split much of the space that is now the College of Liberal Arts. It was all very jolly. The two programs shared lots of conversation and attempted some joint programming. After Frank left for new opportunities in Nashville, Lillian served as Interim Director then Director herself before returning to the University College in 2003 as an Assistant Dean. She retired in 2014 and moved to Maryland with her husband, Steve, almost four years ago.

In 2013, Steve was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a cancer with protocols for treatment but no cure. Through his doctor's efforts, Steve was approved to participate in a clinical trial at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. Steve's job transferred him to the DC office, so they moved. He will be in the trial for another two years. He is doing well.

Fearing boredom, Lillian took a job as an academic advisor at the University of Maryland University College without realizing it was an online university. Student contact was via the phone and more like marketing than advising. Not her type of "advising" at all, but she hung in two years before retiring again.

As health permits, she and Steve enjoy travelling around the country by car or cruising the Caribbean. She also spends time with her 90 year-old mother who lives nearby and still drives. Her mom has lured her into the activities of her really "senior" group of women who do



lunch, take gambling trips and go to the movies. Despite her best dodges, Lillian finds herself joining the over-the-hill gang at least once a month.

The Johnsons return to Dayton often because Lillian is still involved in several community organizations. While at the Bolinga Center, she, Karen Townsend and Charlotta Taylor started "Sister to Sister," a conference for African-American women. After she and Karen left the Bolinga Center, they moved the conference to Sinclair Community College and Karen sponsored the conference under her own consulting company. They will celebrate their 25th conference this September—an absolutely amazing achievement by three incredibly strong Black women!

Overall, Lillian reports that life is good. All three sons are doing well. The oldest, Ronald, serves as Director of Social Equity and Inclusion at Edinboro University; Joshua is at the University of Central Florida as program coordinator for veteran affairs and serves as an adjunct professor at the Rosen College for Hospitality Management (UCF); Zachary lives in DC and has his own cleaning service.

Since Steve is a retired vet, he and Lillian were eligible to live at Andrews Air Force Base—the ultimate gated community—guards with guns! Their house is near the golf course and across from the hangar for Air Force One. She enjoys watching the pomp and security associated with hosting foreign and national dignitaries.

"I miss all my friends in Dayton," she concludes, "but I check the WSU website periodically and read the retirees' newsletter so I do feel connected. Thanks for thinking of me,"

by Mary Kenton



WSURA – a Look Back



On October 5, 1993, Rich Johnson (pictured left), who was at that time the Manager of Employment Benefits, presided over the first organizational meeting for a potential WSU retirees' group. A second meeting was held

on November 3, when it was decided to go forward with the organization. All of this was reported in the very first, two-page edition of *The Extension*. The name was meant to suggest that retirees were still part of Wright State, an extension of Wright State—an important extension. Those who didn't like the name were invited to submit something better. Apparently, no one did. A recent discussion of a new name ultimately yielded nothing. *The Extension* it remains.

That first edition also reported on the founding of CHER in January of 1993—the Council on Higher Education Retirees, with 8 of the 14 Ohio schools participating. The original intent of OCHER remains the same: to exchange information among the retirees' groups and to share information about legislation impacting STRS and PERS.

A list of all living retirees—about 400—was attached. They were urged to complete a questionnaire—that, alas, was not attached—designed by sociologist Len Cargan. Its purpose was to determine the level of interest in a retirees' organization. The original group of planners consisted of: Gary Barlow, Carl Becker, Len Cargan, Joanne Cross, Larry Cross, Nick Davis, Billy Friar, Ira Fritz, Freida Jessee, Pat Jessee, Ken Knight, Ron Oldiges, Adrian Rake, Mary Rutkowski, Lew Shupe, Mary Stonecash, Jean Sullivan, Robert Thobaben, Lois Wamsley, Susan Williams, and Gordon Wise.

This fall marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of WSURA, an event we will celebrate throughout the year. Watch for special events on the web page and in the e-newsletter.

By Mary Kenton

WSURA Board – 2018-2019

Executive Committee

President: Joyce Howes
 President Elect: Larry Prochaska
 Past President: Donna Schlagheck
 Secretary: Ruth Schumacher
 Treasurer: Sheryl Provans
 Communications: Mary Kenton

Board Members at Large

Dan Abrahamowicz
 Abe Bassett
 Gary Barlow
 Marlene Bireley
 Peggy Bott
 Judi Engle
 Mary Gromosiak
 Gary Pacernick
 Carol Stevenson
 Robin Suits
 Gail Whitaker
 Dick Williams

Standing Committees

Activities: Mary Gromosiak
 By-Laws/Elections: Gail Whitaker
 Communications: Mary Kenton
 Membership Development: Marlene Bireley
 Sunshine: Peggy Bott
 Scholarship: Gary Pacernick
 OCHER: Peggy Bott and Dick Williams
 Historical Preservation: Dan Abrahamowicz

Liaisons

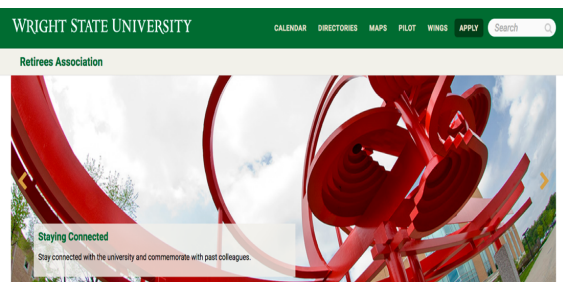
Alumni: Dick Williams
 Athletics Council: Mary Kenton and Larry Prochaska
 Libraries: Gary Barlow

Web Masters: Abe Bassett and Robin Suits

Contact Us

Phone: (937) 775-2777
 E-mail: wsura@wright.edu
 Website: wright.edu/wsura
 Facebook.com/groups/WSURA





On the Web

Have you visited the WSURA website recently? If you had done so in the first six months of 2018, you would have seen a monthly average of:

- 22 stories from the *Dayton Daily News* and other news sources covering the WSU budget problems, Raider athletics, state pension systems, and other news of interest to retirees;
- 20-plus stories from the WSU Newsroom;
- 11 videos featuring WSU news, people, and activities, including local TV coverage;
- 4 events sponsored by WSURA, and beginning in May, another four Alumni Association events open to retirees.

The website also offers updated information about your benefits as a WSURA member, photos from past WSURA events, obituaries of WSU retirees, and links to oral history interviews with faculty, staff, and students from the early days of Wright State.

Check it out at wright.edu/wsura and let us know what you think by sending email to wsura@wright.edu.

By Robin Suits

Stayin' Alive

I hope to celebrate my 70th birthday this coming October. My personal longevity goal is 85. I'll take a few more years, but if I make 85 I'll be happy. What are my odds? I can't think of a single member of my family who has celebrated an 80th birthday. Neither of my parents made it to 70. So, I take an interest in health and wellness, as I am sure many other retirees do as well. In our 30s we worried about mortgage rates, now we worry about mortality rates.

I spent an hour or two recently on the WebMD medical news site looking for an interesting tidbit or two for the newsletter. I found tons of information on a wide variety of subjects. Most of it was quantified. For example, the *American Journal of Epidemiology* reported in June that sitting for more than 6 hours per day can be lethal, increasing your risk of dying early from 14 separate diseases by 19%. Keep moving.

The 2018 Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Chicago advised everyone to cut blood pressure readings to 120/80 or lower by any means possible—diet, exercise, meditation, medication--and cut your risk of dementia by 15%. Hold the salt and sign up for yoga.

On the other side, certain behaviors can improve your odds of a long, healthy life. Eating fish is a good example. The American Heart Association says that eating two fatty-fish meals a week lowers your risk of sudden cardiac death by 50%. Just eating one serving lowered the risk of ischemic stroke (the blood clot in the brain type) by 14%. Wow! Salmon all around.

Walking 30 minutes at least 5 times per week can add years to your life—we all know that by now. But according to the June 1 *British Journal of Sports Medicine* it matters just how quickly you walk. Amblers reduced their risk of dying early by 20%, while those who walked briskly (3 to 4 mph) cut their risk by 24%. The benefit was even more pronounced in those 60 and older, a 53% reduction for brisk walkers.

What is the bottom line? What is an individual's personal calculus? If I walk really fast, can I sit for two more hours and have an extra glass of wine? And what about leafy greens—magic food or deadly salad? Somebody call an actuary! Or better yet, call your doctor. "Sticking with one primary care doctor may help you stay healthy and extend your life," says a study published on June 28 in the *BMJ Open*. A personal relationship developed over time with the entire medical team is ideal. L'Chaim!

By Mary Kenton

WSURA Fall Activities

Woodland Cemetery: History, Mystery, Mayhem and Murder Tour

Thursday, September 20 – 2:00 p.m.

Location: Woodland Cemetery (937) 228-3221
118 Woodland Avenue Dayton, OH 45409

RSVP: by Friday, September 14 to mary.gromosiak@wright.edu or (937) 974-4010

The tour, approximately two miles in length, is considered fairly strenuous and is not recommended for those who use walkers. There are no resting places along the way. Part of the walk will be uphill and on grass. The tour will last between 1 ½ and 1 ¾ hours. There is no cost for the tour, but donations will be accepted through the guide.

Fall 2018 Live and Learn Workshops by Gary Barlow

Thursday, September 27 (Part I) 10 am - noon

Thursday, October 4 (Part II) 11 am – 1 pm

Part I: Elements of Art

In the first session we will relate to various elements of art, such as line and space, with a demonstration of a simple line drawing. We will also study one of Jackson Pollock's "drip" kinesthetic paintings as well as the structured lines from a Gothic cathedral.

Location: WSU Foundation Building, Room 210. The building is situated directly behind Wendy's Restaurant across from the main entrance to campus. Free parking.

Part II: Visit Dayton Art Institute

Admission fees waived for this class. At the DAI we will view various art works that relate to the content that was discussed in the first workshop session. One point of focus will be to study the structure of art works, with an emphasis on the use of line, space and color.

RSVP: by Thursday, September 20. Space is limited. Contact Marlene Bireley at mkbphd@aol.com or call the WSURA office at (937) 775-2777 to leave a message.

WSU Health and Benefits Fair

Wednesday, October 24 (tentative date) – 10 am - 1 pm

Location: WSU Student Union.

Dayton Hollywood Racino & Dinner in the 2nd Floor Skybox

Thursday, October 25 – 5:30 pm

RSVP: by October 17 to mary.gromosiak@wright.edu or call (937) 974-4010

Discussion on the 2018 Mid-term Elections

Wednesday, October 31 – 1 pm

Featuring Paul Leonard, former Dayton Mayor and Lt. Governor of Ohio

Location: WSURA office, Room 210 Foundation Bldg. directly behind Wendy's Restaurant across from the main entrance to campus. Free parking. Feel free to bring a brown-bag lunch and join us!

WSU Theater Matinee "Crazy for You"

Sunday, November 11 – 2 pm

Cost: \$15. Number of tickets available: 25

RSVP: by Friday, October 19 to mary.gromosiak@wright.edu or call (937) 974-4010. Tickets last year sold out quickly.



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PAGE 8

The Extension

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Cut off dates for articles:

Nov. 15 – Winter

Feb. 15 – Spring

May 15 – Summer

Aug. 15 – Fall

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Dayton, OH 45435-0001

Has Your Wright State Email Account Expired?

A member recently contacted the WSURA office to ask why his name no longer appeared on the university online directory. He was an emeritus professor who retired five years ago, and said he still wanted to use his wright.edu email account and maintain his listing in the Wright State online directory.

He was unaware of a university policy that was implemented after he retired. In order to receive continued access to a WSU email account and directory listing, retirees must request access upon retirement. Initial access is for five years, with an option to request continued access for an additional five years. To request or renew your access, submit the Retiree Account Request form on this page: wright.edu/information-technology/forms.

To be eligible, retirees must have Emeritus status (Faculty only); or must have retired under one of the university-sponsored retirement programs (e.g., ARP or one of the State of Ohio systems) and must have at least ten (10) years of direct employment at Wright State (e.g., paid directly by Wright State, not a third-party).

By Robin Suits